



# Marxism

Lecture 4 – Alienation

John Filling

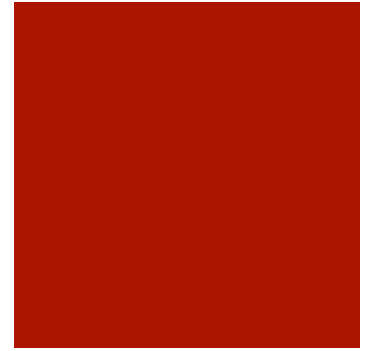
[jf582@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jf582@cam.ac.uk)

# Marx's critique of capitalism

1. Alienation

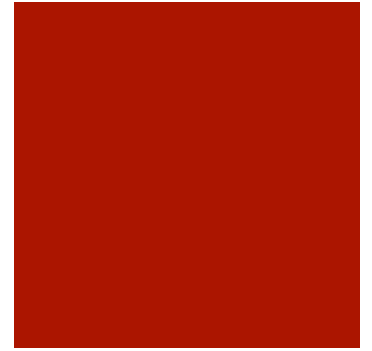
2. Exploitation

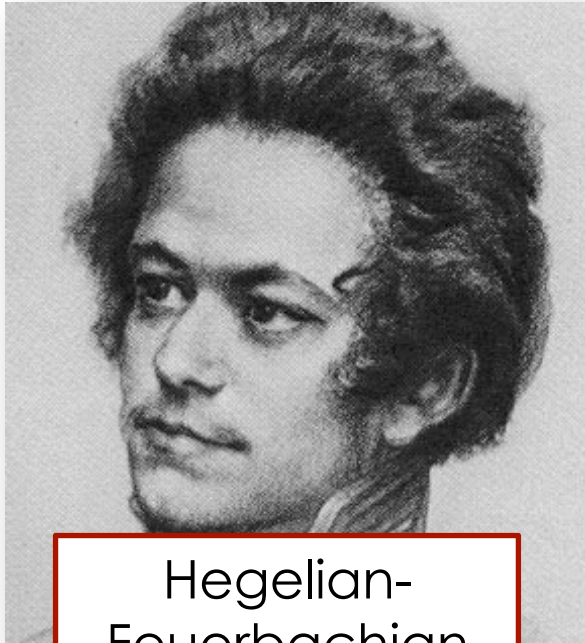
3. Domination



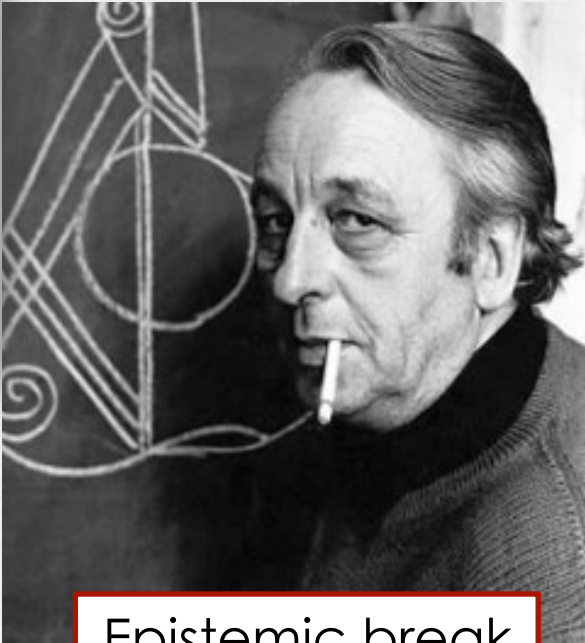
# Overview

1. A Tale of Two Marxes?
2. Alienation in general
3. Alienation in Marx's early writings
4. Alienation in Marx's mature writings
5. Questions
6. Summing-up

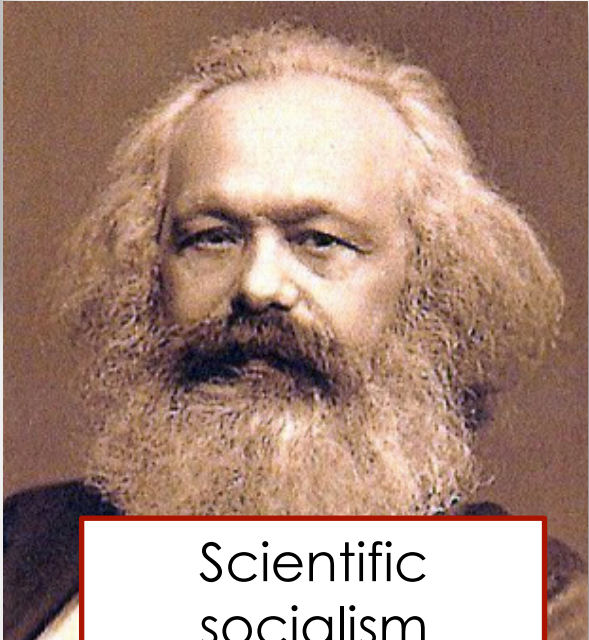




Hegelian-  
Feuerbachian  
problematic

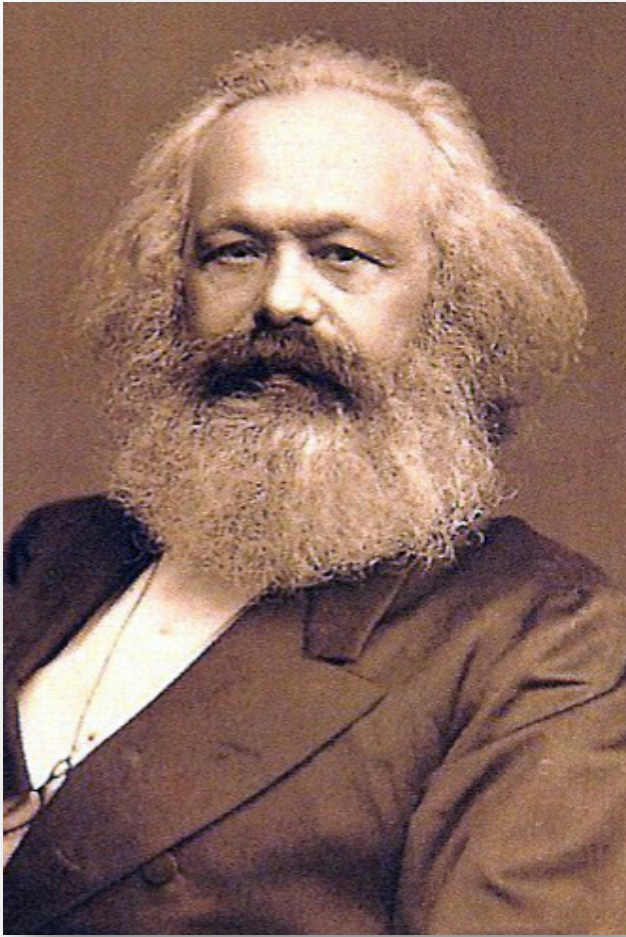


Epistemic break



Scientific  
socialism





## Early

- *On the Jewish Question* (1843)
- *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'* (1843-4)
- *Excerpts on James Mill* (1844)
- *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) [first pub. 1932; English trans. 1959]

## Transitional

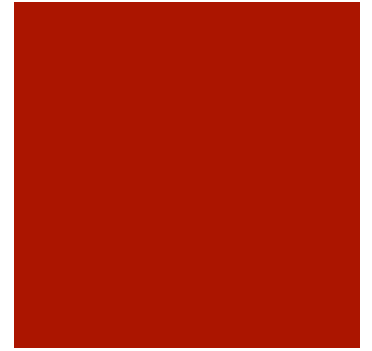
- *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845)
- *The German Ideology* (1845-46)
- *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

## Mature

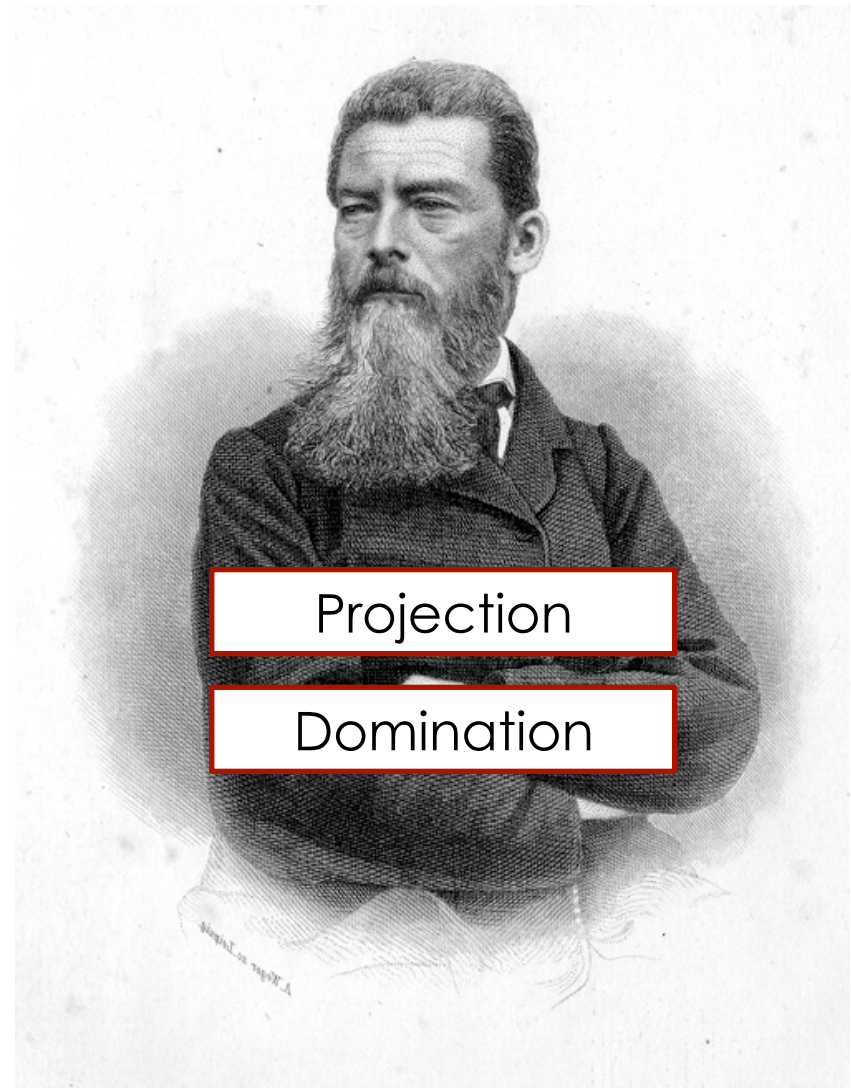
- *Grundrisse* (1857-58)
- *Capital*, vol. 1 (1867; rev. 1872)

# Overview

1. A Tale of Two Marxes?
2. Alienation in general
3. Alienation in Marx's early writings
4. Alienation in Marx's mature writings
5. Questions
6. Summing-up



# Precursors



# Alienation in general



## 1. Etymology

- *Entfremdung* [= “estrangement”; foreign, other]
- *Entäußerung* [= “externalization”; sale]

## 2. Ontology

[and normativity]

- Subjective [= reconciliation]
- Objective [= reform or revolution]

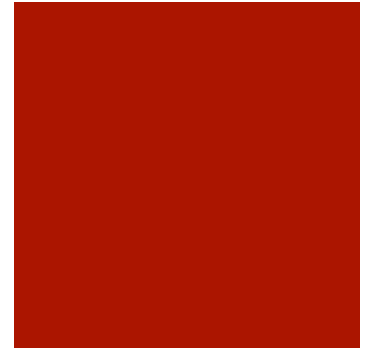
## 3. Evaluation

- Negative [= hostile opposition]
- Positive [= liberating separation]



# Overview

1. A Tale of Two Marxes?
2. Alienation in general
3. Alienation in Marx's early writings
4. Alienation in Marx's mature writings
5. Questions
6. Summing-up





# Objectification

'The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species-being. Or it is only because he is a species-being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity.'

– Marx, *EPM*, in *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 276



## Domination

'labour's product ... confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer ... [T]he more objects the worker produces ... the more he falls under the sway of his product, capital. ... The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. ... The alienation of the worker ... means ... that his labour ... exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him.'

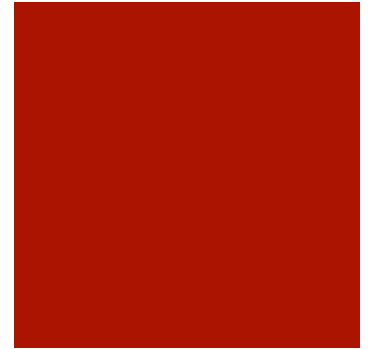
– Marx, *EPM*, in *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 272

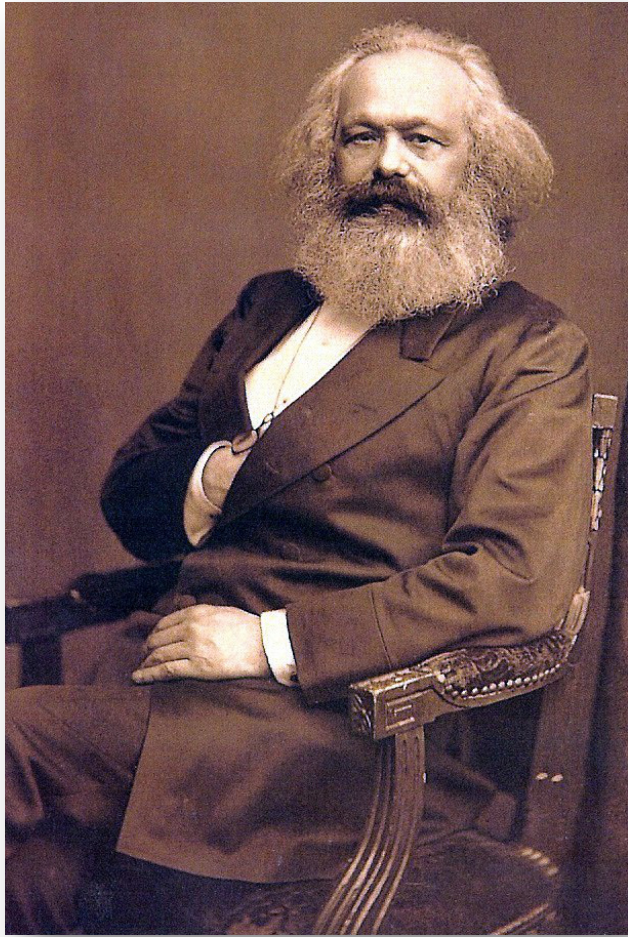
# Alienation in 1844

		Proletarian	Capitalist
Subjective		'not at home'	'happy'
Objective	(a) Product	'rule of the product over the producer'	
	(b) Productive activity	'does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind'	
	(c) Other individuals	'activity performed under the domination, coercion, and yoke of another man'	
	(d) Species being	'free, conscious activity is man's species-character ... [E]stranged labour makes man's species-life a means to his physical existence'	

# Overview

1. A Tale of Two Marxes?
2. Alienation in general
3. Alienation in Marx's early writings
4. Alienation in Marx's mature writings
5. Questions
6. Summing-up

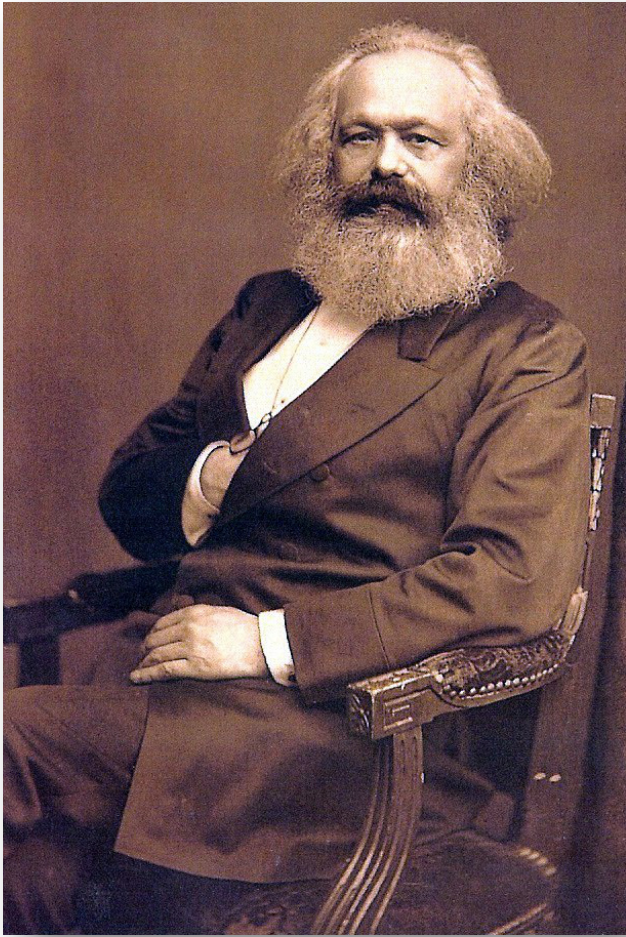




## Objectification

'We presuppose labour in a form in which it is an exclusively human characteristic. A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which has already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realises his own purpose in those materials.'

– Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 283-84



## Domination

'in [the capitalist] mode of production ... the worker exists to satisfy the need of existing values for valorization, as opposed to the inverse situation, in which objective wealth is there to satisfy the worker's own need for development. Just as man is governed, in religion, by the product of his own brain, so, in capitalist production, he is governed by the products of his own hand.'

– Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 772



'within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; ... all means for the development of production ... become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of capital ... the law [of capitalist accumulation] ... rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. ... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalisation and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital'

– *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 799



## (1) Welfare



'within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; ... all means for the development of production ... become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a **torment**; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of capital ... the law [of capitalist accumulation] ... rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. ... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of **misery**, the **torment** of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalisation and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital'

– *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 799

(1) Welfare

(2) Quantitative  
development



'within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; ... all means for the development of production ... become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into **a fragment of a man**, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of capital ... the law [of capitalist accumulation] ... rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. ... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalisation and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital'

– *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 799

(1) Welfare

(2) Quantitative  
development

(3) Qualitative  
development

'within the capitalist system, all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; ... all means for the development of production ... become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an **appendage of a machine**, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they **alienate from him the intellectual potentialities** of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of capital ... the law [of capitalist accumulation] ... rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. ... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, **ignorance**, brutalisation and **moral degradation** at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital'

– *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 799

(1) Welfare

(2) Quantitative  
development

(3) Qualitative  
development

(4) Freedom

'within the capitalist system, all methods of raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; ... all means for the development of production ... become means of **domination** and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a **despotism** the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of capital ... the law [of capitalist accumulation] ... **rivets** the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. ... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, **slavery**, ignorance, brutalisation and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital'

– *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 799

(1) Welfare

(2) Quantitative  
development

(3) Qualitative  
development

(4) Freedom

(5) Individualism

'within the capitalist system, all methods of raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; ... all means for the development of production ... become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of capital ... the law [of capitalist accumulation] ... rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. ... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalisation and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital'

– *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 799

(1) Welfare

(2) Quantitative development

(3) Qualitative development

(4) Freedom

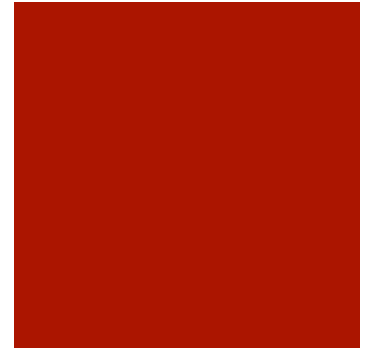
(5) Individualism

'within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; ... all means for the development of production ... become means of domination and exploitation of the producers; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of capital ... the law [of capitalist accumulation] ... rivets the worker to capital more firmly than the wedges of Hephaestus held Prometheus to the rock. ... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalisation and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of **the class that produces its own product as capital**'

– *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 799

# Overview

1. A Tale of Two Marxes?
2. Alienation in general
3. Alienation in Marx's early writings
4. Alienation in Marx's mature writings
5. Questions
6. Summing-up



# Questions



## 1. Ethical questions

- Is alienation always bad?
- Is alienation normatively fundamental or derivative?

## 2. Metaphysical questions

- Is there a 'universal' human essence or 'species-being'?
- How do inanimate products 'dominate' their producers?

## 3. Sociological questions

- Does alienation cause, or merely correlate with, other disvalues?
- Are modern proletarians, in modern work, alienated?
- Can non-proletarians (serfs, capitalists, communists, etc.) be alienated?

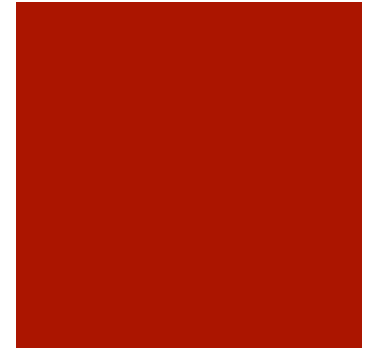


# Overview

1. A Tale of Two Marxes?
2. Alienation in general
3. Alienation in Marx's early writings
4. Alienation in Marx's mature writings
5. Questions
6. Summing-up



# Marx's critique of capitalism



## 1. Alienation

- Separation of things which ought not to be separated
- Domination of the producer by her product

## 2. Exploitation

## 3. Domination

# References

- Stephen Mulhall, 'Species-Being, Teleology, and Individuality' [in three parts], *Angelaki* 3, 1 (April 1998)
- David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (CUP, 2007), pp. 62-82 and ch. 4 (esp. pp. 223ff.)
- G. A. Cohen, 'Marx's Dialectic of Labour', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 3, 3 (1974); reprinted in his *History, Labour and Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), ch. 10
- Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation* (Columbia, 2014)

# Looking ahead

<b>Week</b>	<b>Chapters in <i>Capital</i></b>	<b>Pages in Penguin edn.</b>
Week 2: History	Part 8 (chs. 26-33)	873-943 (= 70pp.)
Week 3: Ideology	Chs. 1-2	125-188 (= 63pp.)
Week 4: Alienation	Chs. 3-7	188-307 (= 119pp.)
Week 5: Exploitation	Chs. 8-12	307-429 (= 122pp.)
Week 6: Domination		
Week 7: Liberalism		
Week 8: Feminism		